

# Do not Just Blame Scientists & Funding

Mint-fresh Bharat Ratna CNR Rao did well to amend some intemperate comments on politicians. But what he said on the state of science in India stands. Some time ago, speaking to the Indian Science Congress, Prime Minister Manhohan Singh had said that while funding had improved, India's "relative position in the world of science had been declining". Rao pointed out that India's rank was a lowly 66 amongst 140 nations in terms of innovation. An earlier report by the 32-member scientific advisory council, chaired by the same chemist, had pointed out that what constrained Indian scientific research and institutions was not funding alone, but also "the overall environment for innovation and creative work". Clearly,



ly, despite the increases in funds in recent years, more needs to be done to ensure genuine progress in science education and research.

Many measures to remedy the situation have been suggested: from raising the GDP share of science and technology, to sending batches of Indian students for doctoral research to noted centres abroad, removing bureaucracy, and creating top-notch centres around outstanding individuals, to actually not separating some centres from the larger university system when it comes to research and development. Prioritising specialised research institutions over universities prevents creativity and innovation among young graduates as well as the sort of interdisciplinary collaborations that universities enable in the developed world.

Let us also admit Indian industry's lack of ambition contributes to stunting research. Ideally, industry should sponsor specific projects, harvest the fruits of academic research and hire talent, giving would-be scientists the right incentives. Industry has a long way to go, in this regard.